UNITED NATIONS

CEDAW

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.
GENERAL

CEDAW/C/SR.375
10 June 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Eighteenth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 375th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 30 January 1998, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. KHAN

CONTENTS

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION (continued)

Third and fourth periodic reports of Mexico

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

98-80148 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION (continued)

Third and fourth periodic reports of Mexico (CEDAW/C/MEX/3-4 and Add.1; CEDAW/C/1998/I/CRP.1/Add.4)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Sauri (Mexico) took a place at the Committee table.

2. Ms. SAURI (Mexico) said that, while 60 per cent of Mexico's population lived in urban centres, in certain states, such as Oaxaca and Chiapas, where there was a high percentage of indigenous people, the population was predominantly rural.

3. Mexico's Constitution guaranteed equality of men and women before the law and contained specific provisions for the promotion of gender equality in education, family planning, rural landownership, citizenship, political participation, employment and wages. It also provided for the social protection of mothers. In June 1990, a National Human Rights Commission had been established to supplement the system for the protection of human rights, in June 1993, the Commission had created the Programme on Matters relating to Women, Children and the Family. The Commission had also carried out a detailed analysis of federal norms with a view to ascertaining whether they were in line with the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean 1995-2001 and the Beijing Platform for Action.

4. The New Agrarian Act of 1992, the Federal Code of Electoral Institutions and Procedures of 1996, the Federal Safety, Hygiene and Working Environment Regulations of 1997, the Domestic Violence Prevention and Assistance Act of 1996 and a decree amending the Federal District Civil Code had all contributed to improving the situation of women. Lastly, women deputies of all parties had agreed in December 1997 to promote the adoption of legislation against sexual and domestic violence in states where no such legislation existed, as well as the protection of women's rights and the elimination of discriminatory local laws.

5. As a result of the participation of the Mexican Government and Mexican non-governmental organizations in the Fourth World Conference on Women, the National Programme for Women: Alliance for Equality (PRONAM) had been launched in 1995 as part of the National Development Plan 1995-2000. PRONAM established a set of strategies for promoting the advancement of women, and an Executive Coordinating Office of the National Programme for Women had been created through the Ministry of the Interior to implement those strategies and to coordinate all inter-agency activities and governmental programmes aimed at improving the situation of women in Mexico. Agencies of the federal public administration were required to comply with the Programme within their respective areas of competence, as were public entities, in accordance with the applicable legal norms.

6. The National Women's Assembly for Democratic Transition had proposed that affirmative action be taken to ensure women's participation in decision-making within the Government, legislative organs, political parties and social organizations. Two of Mexico's main political parties had amended their statutes so that no more than 70 per cent of candidates for the Chamber of Deputies, the Senate or posts in their own executive bodies could be of the same sex. In the July 1997 elections, one quarter of candidates had been women. Currently, 17.4 per cent of seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 14.9 per cent of Senate seats were held by women. Nearly one quarter of members of Mexico's diplomatic and consular corps were women.

7. In order to improve the situation of women living in poverty, the Government had been implementing a Food, Health and Education Programme since 1997. The Programme concentrated on providing assistance to the most vulnerable population groups: pregnant and nursing mothers, children under five years of age, and young people of basic education age. It also provided monetary support to encourage schoolchildren, especially girls, not to drop out of school.

8. With a view to promoting equality of men and women in everyday life, basic education curricula had been revised and PRONAM had urged the media to assist in the elimination of gender-based stereotypes. In addition, a handbook entitled Gender perspective. Guide to the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of research projects and public and civilian activities and a manual entitled Gender perspective. An instrument to build equality had been published in an effort to promote the elimination of gender-based stereotypes in the media and in community and family-care projects, respectively.

9. In 1989, an extensive review of existing legislation on sexual offences had been undertaken with a view to reducing the incidence of sexual offences against women. In 1990, the Pluralistic Victim Support Committee (known as Grupo Plural) had been established and had proposed a series of amendments to the provisions on sexual offences contained in the Federal District Penal Code and in the penal codes of individual states. Lastly, in 1996, the Belem do Pará Convention had been approved by the Senate and was in the final process of ratification.

10. While prostitution was not regulated in Mexico, the sale of sexual services by third parties was illegal. An analysis was currently being made as to whether prostitution could be regulated. A Federal Organized Crime Act had also been adopted.

11. With a view to meeting the challenges raised by the growing demand for education, the Government of Mexico had adopted various strategies, including the decentralization of education through the National Agreement for the Modernization of Basic Education.

12. Approximately 38 per cent of women aged 60 and over could neither read nor write, as compared with 26 per cent of men. In contrast, illiteracy had been practically eliminated among young men and women; currently only 4.04 per cent of the population between 15 and 24 years of age were illiterate. Among the indigenous population, 48.9 per cent of women over 15 years of age could neither

read nor write. Only two out of three indigenous girls between 6 and 14 years of age could read or write, a rate slightly below that for indigenous boys.

13. Enrolment in primary education was almost universal, with no significant difference between boys and girls. For secondary education, the enrolment rate was 89.1 per cent for boys and 84.2 per cent for girls. The female drop-out rate had diminished in recent years, but only 28 per cent of all females and 31 per cent of all males aged between 15 and 24 years had been attending school in 1995. Increasing numbers of women had entered higher education in recent years. In the 1994-1995 academic year, 82 women had been registered for every 100 men.

14. There was clearly a need to pay special attention to the educational needs of girls and young women, given their social and economic inequality in the country. Programmes had been launched to overcome educational backwardness in rural and indigenous communities, and particular attention was being paid to the female population of those areas. An increasing number of services were being made available to indigenous women.

15. The Federal Labour Act proclaimed women's right to work and established regulations for the protection of maternity. It also included special provisions governing the predominantly female sectors of domestic employment and home-based work. Many women lived in conditions of extreme poverty or marginalization, and a very large number of families were headed by women. Women's entry into the labour market was therefore not only a right but a necessity.

16. Major differences and inequalities persisted in terms of the number and the quality of the opportunities available to women. In recent years, considerable changes had taken place with regard to female participation in the labour market. The trend towards their concentration in certain occupations had not changed significantly, however. Women were traditionally employed in the services and commercial sectors, where current social security laws ensured them a number of benefits. The Ministry of Labour was running training programmes for women and special programmes for the disabled unemployed.

17. One of the principal challenges in the health sector was to ensure full coverage, particularly for women and children. A reproductive health and family planning programme had been established by the Ministry of Health; one particularly important aspect of that programme was that a gender perspective had been incorporated into all activities relating to standard-setting, education, communication, provision of services, research and evaluation. Statistics on abortion were difficult to compile in view of significant under-reporting, but it appeared that the incidence of abortion was on the decline.

18. The mortality rate had declined steadily in Mexico in recent decades. In 1995, life expectancy at birth had been 76.1 years for women and 69.7 for men. The decline in the risk of death during pregnancy, childbirth or the post-natal period was the result of measures taken by public health institutions. An intensive public information and awareness-raising campaign had been promoted in all health institutions, in cooperation with government agencies and non-governmental organizations. The proportion of pregnant women attended by a

doctor had increased from 54.9 per cent in the period 1974 to 1976 to 86.1 per cent between 1993 and 1995.

19. The decline in fertility was related to the increased use of contraception; in 1996, 66.8 per cent of women had been using birth control. However, teenage pregnancy continued to be a major problem. It was estimated that approximately 450,000 Mexican teenagers gave birth each year.

20. HIV/AIDS was another public health problem. Although it affected a larger number of men, it was nevertheless an important factor in women's health care. The Government had been pursuing a variety of measures to prevent and deal with AIDS since 1986, when it had established the National Council for AIDS Prevention and Control. Of the 52,000 AIDS patients in Mexico, 13 per cent were women. One priority of the national AIDS programme was to offer all pregnant women access to free treatment, in order to decrease the likelihood that their baby would be born infected.

21. The Government was implementing various funding programmes to foster the productive capacity of women, especially rural women; more recently, it had begun to develop strategies for offering financial support to micro-enterprises owned by women. A special programme had been launched to encourage initiatives by low-income businesswomen. The programme offered comprehensive support, involving information, technical advice, training, technological support and financing.

22. Extreme poverty affected more than 16 million people in Mexico, or 18 per cent of the total population. Available data indicated that 46.1 per cent of households headed by women lived in extreme poverty. Government efforts to alleviate rural poverty were often hamstrung by lack of coordination and continuity and the absence of a gender perspective in their design and application. Although women in Mexico were playing an increasingly important role in agriculture, it was significant to note that 66 per cent of women holding shares in communal land (ejidatarias) were over 50 years old and 29.6 per cent were over 65, meaning that their land was probably being worked for them by their children or other relatives. Women in rural areas had a lower life expectancy at birth and received a lower level of health care during pregnancy than women in urban areas. Lastly, despite the provisions of the Agrarian Act, the organizational capacity of women's industrial-agricultural units (UAIM) had not been used to the full.

23. In constitutional terms, Mexican women were subject to no legal limitations whatsoever. However, an individual's legal capacity also included the capacity to exercise it, which in the case of women was reduced by certain articles of the civil codes of individual states.

24. With regard to the custody of children, a distinction was made between divorce by mutual consent and judicial divorce. In the former, custody was agreed between the spouses and was almost always awarded to the mother. In the latter, custody was determined by the judge. As to the property of the spouses, the marriage contract could be based on either separate or joint ownership of poverty, without making any distinction between the man and the woman.

25. The Mexican Government was aware of the shortcomings of its equality and equal opportunities policy. It also recognized that far-reaching social change could be brought about only by altering the most deeply held values and attitudes in society.

26. Turning to the questions contained in the report of the pre-session working group (CEDAW/C/1998/I/CRP.1/Add.4), she noted, in response to the general question put by the Committee regarding the influence of the North American Free Trade Agreement on the lives of Mexican women, that the Mexican authorities had been unable to reach any definitive conclusions in that regard. It was very difficult to isolate the economic effects of the Free Trade Agreement from other factors that influenced the behaviour of the economy.

27. With regard to question 7, the Programme on Matters relating to Women, Children and the Family of the National Human Rights Commission was directly subordinate, for decision-making purposes, to the President of the Commission and its coordinator was a member of the staff of the President's office. The Programme had a staff of 10 and formed part of a regional network of women's rights offices. As far as its achievements were concerned, it had dealt with 996 cases involving a variety of violations. A total of 339 complaints had been lodged in 1997. Most complaints had involved deficiencies in the public services provided by educational, health care and judicial institutions.

28. Regarding question 8 and the apparent retrogression in the New Agrarian Act, she explained that under the 1971 Agrarian Reform Act, women could operate an industrial-agricultural unit (UAIM) on land set aside by the ejido. However, what had happened in practice was that either the UAIM had been given land that was not adjacent to the area of urbanization, as stipulated, or the land had been made over to another beneficiary, usually a man, or a UAIM had not been organized at all. Institutional intervention had also been necessary in many cases to convince the assembly of the ejido to transfer land to the UAIM. Under the New Agrarian Act, the procedures for obtaining land for a UAIM had become more cumbersome. Ejido authorities often ignored the land rights of the UAIM, and women of the ejido who were not UAIM members could now obtain land. Nevertheless, rural women were playing an increasingly important role in agricultural communities. In 1970, only 31,459 women had been ejido members; by 1996, that number had risen to 139,547. A further 18,890 owned their own land and 93,205 had the use of ejido land; women were also assuming leadership positions in ejido governments.

29. Turning to question 9, the National Human Rights Commission had made a study of legislation in some states which discriminated against women and was inconsistent with national legislation. The results of the study and proposals for amendments had been sent to the competent authorities, and some states had already amended their legislation.

30. With respect to the procedures for amending legislation, the federal executive branch, deputies and senators and the legislatures of individual states could propose legislation. Following its discussion at the local or federal level, draft legislation was sent to the executive branch for comment, approval and publication. The Constitution limited the number of matters on which the national Congress could legislate, and the congresses of individual

states therefore dealt with a number of issues which were of vital importance for the legal protection of women. Any review of Mexican legislation was therefore a long-term task requiring enormous expenditure of time and effort.

31. Turning to question 10, she said that pregnant women and nursing mothers were not permitted to perform work which might endanger their health or that of their babies, including heavy work, night work and overtime, and were entitled to maternity leave from six weeks before to six weeks after delivery. Nursing mothers were given two half-hour breaks per day to feed their babies. None of those provisions had any effect on a woman's salary, benefits or other rights. If an employee exposed to the hazards described in paragraph 41 of the report became pregnant, she was entitled to compensation for any harm sustained, but must inform her employer as soon as she knew that she was pregnant, so that she could be transferred temporarily to a job that was not hazardous.

32. With regard to the protection of minors in the workplace (question 11), elementary and secondary education were compulsory. As a result, children under the age of 14 could not work, while those aged 14 to 15 were limited to a workday of six hours; children under 18 were barred from jobs that would expose them to radiation.

33. With regard to the functioning of, and the relationship among, the Department for the Coordination of Matters relating to Women, the National Programme for Women (PRONAM), the PRONAM Executive Coordinating Office and the Consultative and Social Monitoring Boards (question 12), she explained that the PRONAM Executive Coordinating Office, which came under the Ministry of the Interior, was responsible for formulating, regulating, coordinating and supervising polices in support of women's participation in development. All federal agencies were required to comply with PRONAM. The Consultative and Social Monitoring Boards were auxiliary organs which provided advisory services and follow-up to the Executive Coordinating Office. The Department for the Coordination of Matters relating to Women worked in cooperation with the PRONAM Executive Coordinating Office; the former dealt with international activities on behalf of women and the latter with national activities.

34. The Executive Coordinating Office had a staff of 38 and a budget of US$ 2.9 million; the Consultative and Social Monitoring Boards carried out their functions on an unpaid basis and the Department for the Coordination of Matters relating to Women was funded through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Activities related to the nine objectives of PRONAM were financed from the budgets of the appropriate federal agencies.

35. Responding to question 13, she said that the Social Monitoring Board, in cooperation with the National Institute of Statistics and United Nations agencies, was establishing an information, documentation and research system on the status of women and that a series of workshops on statistical information in the fields of education, labour, political participation, health, households, families and housing were being held. A system of gender indicators for the monitoring and evaluation of the status of women in Mexico would also provide information on women and gender roles and would be used for the formulation of public policy.

36. With regard to question 14, there could not be any national legislation requiring political parties to nominate a certain percentage of women candidates, because each state had its own electoral code. The National Human Rights Commission proposal had been submitted to all state legislatures.

37. Turning to question 15, she said that the proposal to revise labour standards and working hours so that men and women might share family responsibilities on an equal basis, had been presented at workshops, seminars and conferences organized jointly with women's organizations and attended by civil servants and representatives of trade unions and employers. Field surveys had also been carried out to determine the real situation with regard to the sharing of responsibilities within the home.

38. Replying to question 16, she said that gender issues were only just beginning to be incorporated into the curricula of schools of journalism, communication sciences and advertising, but PRONAM had made a study of gender stereotypes and sexism in advertising and an analysis of secondary school distance education programmes; the results of its research would be submitted to the Ministry of Education, advertising associations and the National Radio and Television Board and would be disseminated to public and private higher education institutions.

39. In response to the request in question 17 for information on federal legislation as it related to article 6 of the Convention, she said that the Federal Organized Crime Act had been published in the Diario Oficial. The purpose of the Act was to establish rules for the investigation, prosecution, trial, sentencing and punishment of individuals involved in organized crime. Its provisions constituted public policy and were enforceable throughout the country. The Act covered trafficking in minors but not in adult women. However, the National Human Rights Commission had made proposals aimed at protecting women and girls from that practice in individual states. Most penal codes classified traffic in women under procuring, which was defined as the habitual or casual exploitation of another person's body as a means of support or for profit. Unfortunately, procuring was not considered a serious offence, and deception, physical or psychological violence and lack of consent or enforced consent of the victim were not covered by the penal code. Penalties for procuring varied from state to state and included prison sentences of from 2 to 9 years and fines equivalent to between 50 and 500 days' minimum wage. Only some local codes defined child prostitution as procuring, while most treated it as corruption of minors, which was an offence against public decency. The penalties were light and there was no provision for compensation.

40. The Federal District Human Rights Commission's proposal for the regulation of prostitution was divided into two parts, one dealing with health and safety standards and the other with the authorization and supervision of places of prostitution. The intention was to establish specific places where prostitution could be practised, in order to eliminate the threat to public morality, the corruption of police officers and the clandestine nature of the activity while respecting the dignity of prostitutes and penalizing those who trafficked in their services. The proposal had not yet been adopted.

41. With regard to domestic violence (question 19), she said that the Federal District Department of Public Prosecution had set up a centre for victims and a programme to rehabilitate offenders. With regard to question 20, the Justice Department had organized two meetings of the specialized agencies referred to in paragraph 101 of the report, to determine whether the agencies were functioning effectively and what more needed to be done to make public servants more aware of the problem.

42. Under Federal District criminal and civil law, domestic violence was an offence punishable by imprisonment in serious criminal cases and by divorce and revocation of parental rights in civil cases. Efforts were being made to solve the problem without destroying the family. The states did not have such legislation, although some of them had administrative provisions for the prevention of domestic violence and the care of victims.

43. The President and women members of Congress had proposed legislation designed to discourage and punish domestic violence, protect victims, increase public awareness of the problem and develop policies to combat it. Recent reforms had made domestic violence grounds for divorce, and courts could bar one spouse's access to the other and take other preventive measures. Amendments to penal law had also provided for compensation to be made for criminal acts of domestic violence, and had made the law applicable also to persons living together but not married or related in any way. The penalty for rape, which could also be ruled to have occurred between spouses, varied from 8 to 14 years' imprisonment.

44. No national study had been made of the way in which women who reported violence were treated, but various local studies had led to the development of treatment models which emphasized victims' empowerment. A 1995 survey of citizens' attitudes towards domestic violence, carried out by the Mexican Association to Combat Violence against Women, had contributed to the establishment of shelters for abused women.

45. Replying to question 21, she said that the Convention of Belém do Pará had been adopted by the Senate in 1996 and published in the Diario Oficial; it thus had the rank of constitutional law throughout the country. It was in the process of ratification by the executive branch.

46. Since domestic violence was regulated at the state level, it was not possible to adopt national legislation similar to that of the Federal District. However, a meeting of Mexican women legislators had been held to discuss ways of protecting and assisting victims and of punishing offenders more severely. Several states had adopted legislation on domestic violence, and others were in the process of doing so.

47. The Government had increased its efforts to ensure that victims of sexual offences could report them without fear of retaliation, and most states had specialized agencies which provided medical care and counselling to victims. Between 1989 and 1997, the agencies had assisted over 42,000 victims or relatives of victims. In the first six months of 1997, over 1,400 complaints had been lodged.

48. Anyone convicted of corruption of a minor under the age of 16 was liable to between 3 and 8 years' imprisonment and a fine equivalent to between 200 and 500 days' minimum wage. The penalties were greater when there were aggravating circumstances.

49. With regard to the training of judicial officials (question 24), she said that PRONAM was developing a project to make judges more aware of the importance of applying the Convention of Belém do Pará and that a manual on the Convention would be used at a series of regional workshops to be held in 1998.

50. With regard to question 25, current legislation did not include sexual harassment by co-workers as the offender was defined as being in a position of authority over the victim.

51. Replying to question 26, she said that during the recent revision of the Social Security Act, trade unions had defended women's right to health care and day care centres. Each trade union had a department of women's affairs, and the Mexican Workers' Confederation, the largest trade union, had launched a programme for women workers consisting of educational activities, cultural activities, citizen's education, leisure and recreational activities, training in labour legislation, participation in union activities, and health programmes. Women held high-level posts in several trade unions and women members were in a majority in some unions.

52. With regard to question 27, the Programme of Action for increasing the number of women in the foreign service (para. 167 of the report) was still under preparation. The newly appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs was a woman, as was the Deputy Minister for Multilateral Affairs.

53. With regard to the promotion of higher school attendance rates among working children (question 28), she said that the National Programme of Action for Children 1995-2000 had been reoriented towards more vulnerable groups of children, including working children, and encompassed health, nutrition, education and judicial protection. Special programmes for the education of children of migrant workers had been introduced; 30 per cent of the students in those programmes were girls.

54. Concerning the relatively high drop-out rate among girls between the ages of 6 and 14 (question 29), she said that government action had resulted in improved school attendance among both boys and girls. However, structural conditions such as geographical inaccessibility or extreme poverty, which forced many children to work, made it difficult to achieve universal attendance. Government efforts to improve the situation included the development of remedial programmes in marginalized communities, preschool programmes, a programme for strengthening reading and writing skills, a programme providing secondary school textbooks at no cost, indigenous education programmes and an education, health and nutrition programme.

55. With regard to the indigenous population (question 30), there were 6,715,591 indigenous people in Mexico and the Government provided 45 of the 56 indigenous communities with initial, preschool and primary education, as well as hostels, social integration centres and bilingual radio stations. An estimated

87.9 per cent of the country's indigenous children attended bilingual primary schools. There were no statistics on indigenous children who were receiving other forms of education or were not attending school. Between 1990 and 1996, the number of students and teachers in indigenous primary schools had increased by 23.7 and 32.6 per cent, respectively.

56. Replying to question 31, she said that the 1992 National Agreement for the Modernization of Basic Education had made preschool and secondary education more widely available, improved academic performance and narrowed the gender gap in school attendance. Educational funding was provided at the federal and state levels and had increased at a rate higher than that of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

57. Replying to questions 32 and 33, she said that, under the Federal Labour Act, women employed in the formal sector were entitled to maternity leave from six weeks before to six weeks after delivery. They received full pay during that period and retained the right to return to the same post within one year after giving birth. Mexican legislation prohibited dismissal during pregnancy and maternity leave, and working parents of small children were entitled to special leave when their children were ill.

58. Social security legislation provided for family allowance to be paid to the beneficiaries of an insured disabled person, as well as for the establishment of job retraining centres for the disabled. Retirement legislation established the same rights and obligations for male and female workers.

59. On the question of social security protection for women victims of accidents at work (question 34), employers were responsible for the job-related accidents and occupational diseases of their employees and were therefore required to pay appropriate compensation, regardless of the gender of the affected worker. Workers were also eligible for social security benefits in that connection.

60. The difference in the constitutional and legislative framework governing access to employment (question 35) lay in the treatment given to pregnant women; such differentiated treatment was for their own protection and did not imply any restriction on their rights. Federal labour legislation imposed financial penalties for employers who made the hiring of women conditional on their not being pregnant or married.

61. On the question of whether the reported percentage of women workers included part-time or self-employed workers (question 36), she explained that the economically active population consisted of persons who had been working or had looked for work during the week in which the employment survey was conducted. The category of worker was irrelevant. In 1996, the open unemployment rate for women (4.1 per cent) had been significantly higher than the rate for men (3.5 per cent) (question 37). The category of unpaid women workers (question 38) mentioned in paragraph 232 of the report referred to persons who, during the survey week, had been working in a family business or in agricultural activities for the family's own consumption without receiving

monetary compensation. It also included unpaid non-family workers. Unpaid workers were included in national employment figures.

62. As to the Government's strategies in relation to the situation of women employed in export-oriented assembly plants (maquilas) (question 39), the majority of maquilas complied with the relevant labour legislation. Both the Ministry of Labour and local governments carried out inspections. If inspections revealed violations of labour law, administrative measures were taken to enforce compliance, including warnings of closure.

63. With regard to ILO Convention No. 156 (question 40), PRONAM had been promoting greater public awareness of the importance of sharing family responsibilities by holding workshops and seminars in which public officials and a variety of social organizations participated. A change of attitude towards gender roles was becoming perceptible.

64. Concerning the number of public and private day-care centres and the percentages of children attending them (question 41), by December 1997, the Mexican Social Security Institute had had an installed capacity of 65,000 places. Federal, state and municipal employees also had access to day-care services free of charge, and private day-care centres existed for those workers who could afford them. Nevertheless, the care of children was still mainly entrusted to members of the extended family. Access to day-care centres was open to healthy children between the ages of 43 days and four years whose working mother or custodial parent was insured. Parents were not required to pay for the services of public day-care centres.

65. Turning to question 42, the basic package of health services covered women in marginalized and vulnerable groups, and included basic sanitation; pregnancy, childbirth and post-natal care; immunizations; treatment of diarrhoea, parasites and respiratory infections; prevention and treatment of tuberculosis, diabetes and high blood pressure; and community training in health care. In addition, the solidarity programme operated by the Mexican Social Security Institute in mainly rural areas adapted traditional models of community organization to promote self-help activities and provided reproductive health care.

66. With regard to cancer prevention programmes (question 43), the goals of Mexico's cervical and uterine cancer prevention and control programme were to increase cancer detection coverage for women aged 25 to 64 years to 70 per cent by the year 2000 and to treat 90 per cent of cases diagnosed at an early stage. Public health institutions provided detection services free of charge, and several non-governmental organizations conducted pap smears for a very small charge.

67. On the subject of sex education in schools (question 44), primary and secondary school curricula covered such topics as human reproduction, reproductive health, sexuality and self-esteem.

68. Gender-disaggregated data on the situation of disabled women in Mexico (question 45) were not readily available. Over 10 per cent of children aged 6 to 12 had some kind of disability. A survey of primary school pupils had revealed that more than 2.7 million boys and girls in Mexico suffered from some

kind of disability, although 29 per cent of those were sight related and mostly remedied by wearing glasses. Of the total, 2.12 million were already receiving education in either special schools or ordinary schools. Six per cent of the total disabled population lived alone, while the remainder lived with their families. No information was available on the percentage living in public or private centres. In 1995, a national programme for the integration in development of persons with disabilities had been launched to promote their incorporation into the labour force and to reduce their transportation difficulties. No specific action was being taken to integrate disabled women.

69. On the subject of female sterilization (question 46), family planning services must, by law, include publicity, education, counselling, the selection, prescription and application of contraceptive methods, and infertility treatment. Tubal ligation was available on request; counselling, informed consent and proper medical procedures were stipulated, but a woman did not require the consent of her partner or parents. If a woman was unable to give consent and sterilization procedure was necessary to protect her health, the written consent of her legal representative was required.

70. With regard to the special needs of Mexico's indigenous population (question 47), there were 56 ethnic groups living in the national territory. The rural population, accounting for 26 per cent of the total population, generally had limited access to basic services and lived in conditions of marginalization and poverty. PRONAM established guidelines for meeting the needs of indigenous and rural women. In education, programmes were in place to educate indigenous mothers in the care of young children, to expand teaching of children's mother tongue in preschool education and to develop materials for the teaching of Spanish as a second language. In health, the promotion of safe motherhood and the provision of contraception, particularly among scattered rural populations and indigenous communities, were designed to reduce maternal morbidity and mortality. In the area of poverty alleviation, giving women land, credit and training was essential. To develop production, viable projects were being identified which not only made efficient use of natural resources but also strengthened women's productive capacity and generated income for rural households. Efforts were also being made to safeguard the human, civil and cultural rights of indigenous women and to protect them against all forms of ethnic and gender discrimination.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.